

WILLEMORTE

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PERCY GORDON



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FEUILLEMORTE

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FEUILLEMORTE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

PERCY GORDON

LONDON

LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

1878

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DEDICATION.

To H. C.

AT last : I thought I should not live—so long
The bashful muse who tempted me to song
Has laid her finger on her lips and mine—
Until I said what is the World's, and thine.
Feuille morte ! the hue of death is on the leaves
Which strew our English woodlands here, and thou
Art gone beyond the storm-tost wave which heaves
Around these coasts besieged by Winter now.
What can I say to thee that has not all been said
By fonder hearts and greater tongues than mine ?
Are children greater than the mighty dead
Who hear us speak, and yet may make no sign ?
While I can speak yet will I speak to thee :
I would it were vouchsafed unto me

To say, in words which time would not let die,
All that I feel to-day. But there are floods
Which beat for ever on unmovèd shores,
And there are storms ev'n in our saddest moods
Which end in lives as calm as mine and yours.
Have we not talked together, you and I,
Of life's unbounded possibilities?
—The hopes, which vanish in a single sigh,
The aim which sees a far-off heav'n, and dies.

I heard an echo of a thunder-storm
Among the mountains of the land of song :
I think I saw the outline of a form
As fair as could to earthly spheres belong :
If I, who loved the lightning in the hills,
And thought her lovelier than all dreams have told,
Fail in weak words, where failed the men of old,
To tell what is that happiness which kills,
Perhaps I came unto too late a day,
Or loving dare not love, or knowing cannot say.

Nine years the simple songs I give to thee

Have rested under jealous lock and key.
But my loved river floweth on apace—
How know I how much longer have I grace?
One said, simplicity was strength, but I
May find no star in life's tempestuous sky
Reserved for me. I only know I sing
Because I love the flowers and the spring.

The North is locked in ice ; comes the wild wind
Across the wold, and with its breath the snow :
My heart is very heavy, for I know
That death for both of us comes stealthily behind.
My friend, bear gently with me in this hour ;
No voice is heard to-day amid the crowd :
I make no moan because the grapes are sour,
But Fame must blow her trumpet long and loud
To speak to times as dead as thine and mine.
Come let us face that hour when, hoar with rime,
Over the graves which softly-tending time
Has made for names as lost as this and thine,
The grass shall blow, and we shall be forgotten.
Let us not wait to watch the roses die ;

Fruit, faith, fame and flow'rs—all alike are rotten,
And all alike will bud, breathe, burst and flame again.
Meanwhile the star of Hope is in the sky
Of morning wan from midnight storm and rain,
And looks as sweet as if love were not dead ;
And the pale crocus lifts its dainty head.

You knew the cottage by the river-side,
The white gate and the garden and the silvery tide,
The jessamine about the porch, the flower-beds,
Ambitious wilderness of lilies and of weeds,
And everything a man's vain fancy weds
Who lives a day, and knows not what he needs,—
Charlie and *Rock*, the boat, the pipes, the wine,
The piano and the books—from *Hudibras* to *Heine* :
No more—farewell to fortune and to fame,
One thing survives—your friendship is the same.
And some may laugh, and some may sneer, and some
Will understand these songs which leave their home,
And like red leaves whirl'd by the Autumn wind
Rise, fly, fall,—vanish out of sight and mind.

If in between the thoughtless lines you trace
Some touch of sadness, memory of a face
Wistful and fair, some yearning for a love
Earth has not,—or can hear some words she said
Who was, and is not—peace be with the dead—
Or when the winds are still, a footstep falling
Ev'n on dead leaves, some voices calling
Over the great wide river,—mingled pain and love,
'Tis hers not mine to silent tears to move :
For what is best is little : what is weak is love.

.
Pile up the logs : close the thick curtains round :
Loud roars the gale : the distant breakers sound :
This cup to thee,—and health to absent friends,—
Peace, life, and love,—to thee the Author sends.

Christmas, 1877.

FEUILLEMORTE.

*Tell me not the doom of loving,
Though the love were all in vain—
Giv'n the pleasure with the pain,
I would love and lose again.*

PART I.

I.

THY wavelets tremble to the stars,
Thy beauty changeth with the moon :
And lovelier are those silver bars
Than all thy golden floods of noon.

Cold as the loveless, chill as death,
Thy silent waters glide away :
In ghostly shapes thy misty breath
Creeps round the meadows, faint and gray.

The garden of my love is mute,
She and her birds are fast asleep :
No wind of night, nor lover's lute
May wake them from their slumber deep.

And I return across the lea,
Leaving the frost upon her lawn :
And Thou go'st, dreaming of the sea,
Towards the red autumnal dawn.

II.

We trod upon the velvet lawn, we look'd into the sky,
The lark was singing in the blue, the clouds were
sailing high,
And past the golden lily-crowns the river hurried by.

The boat was rocking in the cove ; we loos'd it from
its chain ;
For one long day we bade adieu to any earthly pain,
And down the stream of light and love we floated
once again.

Within the corn the poppy glow'd, the iris in the
reeds,

Upon the stile a raven black sat conning its misdeeds,
Adown the wind a heron swung and dropt into the
weeds.

We heard the grasshopper at work, the rat splash in
the pool ;

We said the dwellers in the towns were—every man,
a fool—

Across the happy harvest land the breezes blew so
cool.

For who could court sad memories, or cherish bitter
mood

Whose soul had bath'd within that blissful sunshine
and the flood

Which swept us from the light into the shadow of the
wood ?

It was the Indian summer then, the time when winds
are wooing

The high tree-tops in tones so soft none know that
winds are blowing :

The leaves but murmur to the notes of wanton ring-
doves cooing.

We found a bow'r of reeds so rare, no flag was bent or
broken,

Only the open skies above the boundless world be-
token,

And love's wild wishes were the only words that there
were spoken.

The story was so very long, we told it till the gloam-
ing ;

We drifted onward till we heard the sound of water
foaming,

And knew the weir was right ahead ; the silent bats
were roaming.

Whence comes this breeze, the presage sad of evening
surely bringing ?

We too must homeward with the band of reapers softly
singing,

With fading light, and o'er the stream, the church-
bells sweetly ringing.

III.

The night is dark, yet overhead,
The stars are in the silent skies ;
The corncrake in the osier-bed
Wakes all the river with his cries.

The day has been so very sweet,
But darkness ends the longest day,
And all has ended as was meet,
My darling,—she has gone away.

I love the river in the dark,
Which ripples o'er its sandy bars,
And silently my little bark
Moves up the stream beneath the stars.

I leave the highway of the flood,
And creep along the empty lawn,
The house is silent, and the wood,
The lights are out, the blinds are drawn.

I paddle up the tideless creek,
The launch in gloom at anchor lies,
The ghost-like swans the sedges seek,
The swing-bridge stands against the skies.

To sit in silence, and to mark
A planet for her Paradise,
To feel her presence in the dark,
To fancy I can see her eyes—

To whisper something to my love,
So far away, and lock'd in sleep,
Which may perchance her slumbers move,
With ripples in the dreaming deep—

This is the fancy of the hour :
And then to turn and slowly pass
The house, the bridge, the church, the tow'r,
The white posts standing in the grass.

And out upon the tide again
We come, and drift in silence down ;
It all seems like a passing pain,
One day of bliss too swiftly flown.

And midnight strikes from yonder tow'r,
A cold wind wakes among the reeds ;
We glide across the floating flow'r
Which gems with white the matted weeds.

And has to-day been all a dream ?
I ask, but no one speaks a word :
A gleam of stars upon the stream—
They are the lights of Halliford.

IV.

As one that takes his lute to play
And finds the notes are dumb,
I wander'd up the stream to-day,
And thought unto my loves to tell
How I did love them passing well :
But all my thoughts are fled away—
The words—they will not come.

For who could sing an earthly song
When all the woods are full of birds,
And down the river-reaches throng

The voices of the summer-world ?
The waters o'er the loud weir hurled
Shout as they riot and race along—
My heart—it is too glad for words.

My loves are talking unto me,
Nor ask of mine or thought or theme ;
He skims above the mimic sea,
My feather'd exile from the south :
As when one seals a maiden's mouth
With kisses—wind and wave and tree
Do fold my heart in a summer-dream.

v.

In the time of falling leaves
I love to think of spring,
The coming immortality
Of which the poets sing,
The sweet things which will never die,
However much one grieves.

She was the sweetest child on earth,
The darling whom I crown'd

With daisies, white with golden hearts,
When, seated on the ground,
What time the folded violet parts,
We watched the summer's birth.
My lady was so sweetly staid,
She thought the rooks unholy,
Because so great a noise they made
On Sabbath mornings in the shade
Of those high elms, and truly,
I half believed the little maid.
We lay at length upon the grass
When sermon-time was over,
I promised her no other friend
Should ever be her lover,
Whatever coming years should send,
Whatever they might bring to pass.
She built a ship of elder-slips
And launched it on the river,
We watched it vanish out of sight
Where yonder rushes quiver ;
She said my fortune was its freight,
And pursed her dainty little lips,
And wagered fifty kisses
I could not get my boat again,

And looked so lovely and so shy
I took them without asking why,
As thirsty flowers drink the rain :
For which forbidden blisses
She vowed a retribution sweet
Sometime, perhaps to-morrow :
I knew she loved me far too well,
A moment's frown to borrow.
Those golden days had flying feet,
And ended—how, I may not tell.

I only know that when I come
Across this meadow to the stream,
And thro' the gate, and by the church,
I seem to fall into a dream
Of Lilian and the golden days
When we were young together.
And when the weary teams come home,
And shadows from the feathery birch
Lie black at evening on the grass
In quiet summer-weather,
I wonder what the river says
Unto its swaying rushes,
I wonder why the seasons give

White blossoms to the bushes—
I wonder, when the breezes pass
Deep-scented with the clover,
How is it in the days gone by
When happier stars were in the sky
I ever was her lover—
I wonder why I care to live
Since those sweet days are over.

VI.

A long green slope unto the water side,
The sunshine glancing on the rolling tide,
A light skiff straining at its tethering cord
Beneath the grey stone bridge of Shillingford ;
Above, the Inn, half hid in roses white,
High up, a blue flag fluttering in the light ;
Girls in the garden, travellers at the door,
A pretty maid who foaming tankards bore ;
Behind, the dusty winding road, and higher
The yellow woods touch'd with autumnal fire ;
Below, the silver Thames the valley fills,
Then Benson's roofs back'd by the Chiltern hills ;

Westward the shadows flit across the plain,
And far away the clouds are streak'd with rain ;
And in the midst of fields of rippling rye
Dorchester's tower stands against the sky.

VII.

We heard the garden gate-way creak,
He came, and said it would be fine ;
We patted Maggie on the cheek
And said we would be back to dine ;
She only had one dinner, yet
She ask'd what banquet we might choose,
We laugh'd, and left her in a pet,
And started on our daily cruise.
We took the books we never read,
And filled our flasks with barley-bree,
No one could tell, so Charley said,
How long our voyage might not be—
That voyage of discovery
Across the fields of rippling rye
To find the *Fleur-de-lys*.

We drifted from the grassy shore
And paddled slowly up the stream,
Watching the martins dip and soar,
And plying still a lazy oar
We listened to the distant scream
Of noisy rooks in windy skies,
And such untutor'd harmonies
As wander over happy fields
When lowing kine come down to drink
And crowd at noon-day by the brink
Of brooks that babble thro' the wealds,
And rustling autumn breezes bow
The poplars tall and pollards low
That mark the winding river's flow.

The fairy gossamer thread
Shines in the sunlight overhead ;
We pause to watch the sweating team
Towing the heavy barge up-stream ;
And, of a sudden, some one said
He would not scull us any more—
So drifting to the flowery bank
We put our mutineer ashore,
And into bliss and silence sank,

While he uncoil'd the dripping line,
And shouting to our pilot bold
To clear his starboard bow, struck out
To tow us thro' the weeds that twine
About the keel ; and in and out
The banks we glide, by green and gold,
Along the winding grassy ridge,
Until at length we came
Unto the shaky wooden bridge
That marks the mouth of 'Thame.

By many a bend, and shoaling bar
We journey'd thro' the ripening corn,
And softly on the air was borne
The whirr of scythes at work afar ;
And here of old the chariot wheels
Of Britain's hosts swept o'er the plain,
And here the rising mound reveals
Where Rome's encampments yet remain.

By tangled weeds, and bush and briar,
By banks aglow with crimson flow'rs,
Where hums the golden-banded bee,
We push our exploration higher,

And warn'd by swiftly fleeting hours
Affect to hide our deep desire

To find the *Fleur-de-lys*.

At last we saw some garden walls,
And heard the sound of water-falls,
Then voices on the breezes blown,
And lo ! the church, the bridge, the town.

.

Fast fly the hours with song and jest,
Alas ! that days like this should end !
But mindful of the evening star,
That hangs above the flaming West,
We start for home, and so descend
The shining stream, by shoaling bar,
And shadowy pool, and winding bend.
And where the dragon-fly at noon
Shot like a gleam between the reeds,
The gnats now hum a drowsy tune,
The moor-hen darts beneath the weeds.
And with the evening breeze which fans
The rustling rye, once more we came
Unto the rustic bridge which spans
The reedy banks of Thame.

VIII.

The clouds are painting shadows on the hills,
The wind is up the stream,
And shakes the ivy round the window-sills
And sighs, as if to seem
That breeze which shook the jessamines in June :
Methinks it comes too soon.

The last rose shudders at its chilling breath,
The river murmurs, as in dream,
And half-drown'd reeds from underneath
Make arrows in the stream :
Fast into silence sinks the year, as dies
The light in fading skies.

And Memory casts its shadows on my heart,
Mine eyes are filled with tears,
With empty out-stretched hands I see depart
The sad unfruitful years,
Which leave me, since my sweet love went away,
Alone, unloved, to-day.

IX.

Once more, at eventide, we slacken'd sail,
And slowly drifted under Cliefden woods ;
No leaflet stirr'd in that autumnal gloaming ;
For far along the winding silvery vale
A sad and solemn silence falls and broods :
The shining restless stream alone is roaming.
And waiting for the harvest moon so long,
Our Celia sang her last and sweetest song.

*' The dawn is arisen, my love, awake !
Unlock thy soft white arms ;
For the morning breezes thy casements shake,
The sun thy chamber warms.*

*' The wind is blowing from over the seas,
Unclose thy wondering eyes ;
The plover is calling along the leas,
And the dufts of the roses rise.*

*' Farewell to thy dreams of old, my sweet,
And wake to a fuller day ;
The floods of thy life and mine must meet,
And love will have its way.'*

She ceased, and as the last notes died away,
The lingering twilight one shade deeper fell :
The flit-mouse wheels against the pearl-gray sky ;
And we are sad, for that our golden day
Is dead : but far away a sweet slow bell
Is pealing to the folded Autumn fields :
The measur'd beat of oars comes gently by,—
Another song we ask, and Celia yields :

I.

*' Tell me, when thy sweet lips sever
From these kisses drawn to thine,
If our wild and weak endeavour
To endow with life for ever
Love which thus can plead and pine—
Make thee weary, sweetheart mine ?*

2.

*' So will I kiss thine eyes asleep,
And cease from love's sweet pain ;
And when the wind wakes o'er the deep,
And blushes of the wild dawn creep
Across the hills, across the main,
Kiss them awake again.'*

X.

As fairy-boats of the forest, little leaves
The rude wind shakes into the hurrying stream,
Unconscious of the burthen it receives,
 Muttering its Autumn dream—
Forlorn and rudderless, drift into coves
By twining elder-branches made a gloom,
And anchor, till a bubbling eddy roves,
 Hugging the bank's perfume,
Into the haven—then dart into the sun,
Playing mid-stream, and dance in a blaze of gems,
Ling'ring to kiss adieu, ere the last run,
 To crowns of lily-stems :
So, on the sloping hills of life we muse,
And turning sorrowful, weep in the shade,
Until a tone, a touch, hard to refuse,
 Or mirth by others made
Draws us into the sunlit fields again ;
And so it changes ever, hour by hour,
And shadows vex the sunset, after rain,
 Watched from the garden bow'r.

XI.

I stand beside thy flood, O river that I love,
As, one by one, the twilight blots the hills around ;
And from the sea of lowering cloud which rolls above
The warning rain-drops patter on the leaf-strewn
ground.

By the rambling feet of those who loved thy laughing
summer
And the hands which pluck'd thy flowers
Art thou now forsaken,
And the northern blast hath promised thee a wreath
of virgin snow !

Swiftly up-stream, before the wind, behold thy latest
comer—

The wild-duck winging thro' the Autumn showers
His flight unto his winter-home, to waken
Yon dreary marshes into life, where the floods are
out, below.

Sweet wanderer from the far-off ice-bound fiords,
Could I but follow over land and sea

When thy bright wings shall once more northward
 roam,
My memory might forget her last cold words,
This life-long pain might cease to be,
My aching heart, perchance, might find beyond the
 sea
Some peace, if not a home.

XII.

Flow swiftly past the bending reeds
 That vainly stem thy billows,
And hurry hence their million seeds
 To sleep beneath thy willows ;
But not with thee by bridge and spire,
And many a city's fitful gleam
 Seek I the distant main,
But rather rest with these and dream
Towards the sunset's fading fire,
 Till Spring shall wake again.

XIII.

O river, running to the sea,
Thy waters shall no more return,
My days flow on, and like to thee,
They bear me to a common bourn.

The hour will come when I shall rest
Where those I loved have gone before,
And I must leave the useless quest
Of peace on any earthly shore.

Dost thou not love this sunny spot,
When winds are soft and blowing free ?
Surely the blue forget-me-not
Along thy banks is dear to thee ?

What say thy swallows when they touch
With glancing wing thy waters bright ?
Methinks we love thee over-much,
Thy one response is but—Good-night.

O river, bring'st thou from the hills
That lie alone and far away

Some sadd'ning memory which kills
The ripple of thy joy to-day?

Did some cold rain of yesternight
Whisper of oceans vast that lie
Far-off, beyond us, out of sight,
Thy doom and thy eternity?

And I must follow, tho' my heart
Is with the golden Autumn here ;
The faithless swallows will depart,
And flow'rs must blossom elsewhere.

I cannot hold thee in my hand,
Only my love to thee I tell :
Sweet river of a sunny land—
Thy one response is still—Farewell !

NELLIE.

WHENCE that pensive air
 Ever on thee, little one—
 Fairy being, pale and fair,
 Thou, with life but just begun?
 Whence that wistful look
 In thy deep blue eyes,
 Bending o'er thy story-book
 When the sunlight dies?

It is playing on the glow
 Of thy golden hair,
 Drooping down in silken flow
 Round thy face so wondrous fair :
 I have seen some lovely faces,
 I have look'd on eyes divine,
 But their beauty bore no traces
 Of such loveliness as thine.

Tell me, child of strangest fancies,
Why that tear upon the page,
Dropt from eyes whose shaded glances
Vest the sweetness of thine age
With a nameless charm,
Breathing of thy future years,
And a purpose fix'd and calm
Burning in the spirit's spheres?

Have the wrongs of Princess fair
Caused thy gentle breast those sighs?
Or the woes of Golden-Hair
Dimm'd the fringes of thine eyes?

Wander, pensive little one,
In thy sunny fairy-lands ;
For the hours of lifetime run,
And the waves roll o'er the sands,—
Washing out the forms we traced,
Smiling through our childhood's tears,—
Structures built to be effaced
By the tide of after years.

Methinks such pearly tears
Dimming eyes so softly bright,

When sweet music fills thine ears
 Breathe not sorrow but delight :
 Hearest thou the angels' flight
 When their white wings pass thy door,—
 Or, do they in dreams at night
 Bring thee, darling, whispers from th' eternal
 shore?

THE VOYAGER.

HE stood on the rocks as the tide flow'd in—
 His skiff on the beach below ;
 The billows pass'd with a shoreward din, ;
 The white foam sang, while the moon was low ;
 And the song that arose from the mermaid's grave,
 Pass'd into his soul by the lonely wave,
 And he delay'd to go.

A sheet of mist, like a phantom sail,
 Came ashore from the dreary sea ;
 The star of the north slid behind the vail,
 Leaving it dark, and what seem'd to be
 The wandering sigh of a restless soul
 Shriek'd as it pass'd with the breakers' roll,
 And the night laugh'd loud on the lee.

He listed the words that the ocean foam
Shouts loud, and the wild wind hears ;
He was sad for the soul that had lost its home,
And an ancient love in the misty years ;
For he knew that the tide returns from the shore,
But life passes by with its wail evermore,
And the world is water'd with tears.

Why is the Past like the fairy-tale
Of an isle in the distant sea ?
In childhood 'twas there when youth set sail
With the morning-sun and a shout of glee ;
What matter, saith he, if Heaven be more,
Why weep for the wreck on the lonely shore,
Or the isle that we no more see ?

Why do we stay, ever looking behind,
Through shadows and mist and rain ?
Can we trace no hope of a better kind
In the breaking day on yonder main ?
Where is the faith in a nobler life
In the soul which sinks in sorrow's strife ?
O rather go forward again !

So he turn'd from the rock to his boat on the wave,
God's breezes blew blithe and free,—
Saith he,—‘ Now let the tears of the brave
Fall for the brave, but life's rough sea
Calms at the worst, and the sun bursts through
Night and her vail, with my work to do
I sail with my love to a sweeter grave,
And pass to Eternity ! ’

LEILA.

A PAUSE in my life of toil in the mighty town,
 A hush in the roar of wheels by day and night,—
 And I sit by the sea, where the daylight lingers down
 Long in the west, and miss with a deep delight
 The early dark of the city, and its frown.

A smile on the care-worn face we love repays
 Weeks of the gloom that memory traces there—
 A valiant heart fell asleep in darken'd ways—
 Ah me ! the terrible change in a face once fair !
 So the break in my life gilded the after days.

The glorious light on the swell of the summer sea,
 Greets me at morn, and a rushing wind strikes force
 Into the heart-beat, throbbing life ! for a taste of thee !

The touch of God's simple things should teach
remorse

To those who speak in scorn of the simple things
that be.

I liv'd in the Present then, but I toil'd for the coming
years,

For others if I should die : and music stole
Over some fancies warm—the mirage of tears—
In those long hours : a secret voice in the soul
Tells me these forms will rise as manhood nears.

Life is a sense hard-working hour by hour ;
Musings are sad which, ending, blend not well
With the sweat of toil, and the call for zest and pow'r ;
Then what have I to do with dreams that tell
How some do watch for love from a lofty tow'r ?

In the even flow of my life in the busy town
No pulse of my being dulled which panteth for truth ;
If visions arose, what could I do but crown
Phantoms divine with hope, the star of my youth ?
The world is wondrous fair as I climb and pause to
look down.

Who is the fool so hard and blind that shall say
The daily round of labour loseth force
For a cherish'd faith in the joy of a coming day
When the thread of life we wind shall seem less
coarse,
And lovelier years the life-long march repay ?

Yet I care not overmuch whether they come or no,
For life and joy at the most are flowers that fade :
He cheateth himself, methinks, that liveth not so
That his life continueth hereafter : were we not made
To rise through a million of ages, and ever to grow ?

But I let them come—those dreams, they were sweet
to me,
Striving hard in the heat of the noon at the hill
Sloping before me to heaven : even for thee,
My darling, the world shall yield its tribute until
Our love pass beyond the veil, and time cease to be !

Why does her face flit by, on the sea, in the closing
gloom—

That face which I never saw before I came ?
What is there sadder to-day in the distant boom

Of breakers upon the cliff? What in the name
Of a stranger to me who passeth away to her doom?

Passeth away? ah me ! 'tis not hard to tell
Why amid perfect peace, disquiet is here ;
To-morrow the vision fadeth—is it not well ?
I shall hear again the tramp of the crowd,—my calling
 is there !
I had built but a castle of sand ; I laugh'd, and it fell.

I am not untrue to the past, for I never have found
A life that could beat for ever and ever with mine ;
Though often in fancy I saw her who innocently
 wound
The gentlest of spells around me : as the stars shine
In beauty, I lov'd her ; for ever I would be thus bound.

Why should I speak of the child? I shall see her
 again ;
The mightiest power of mammon never could bribe
That which I hold to be the highest and holiest
 gain—
A soul unfetter'd to love—to stoop to subscribe
To the infamous lie that can bind two souls with a
 chain.

Am I wild that I talk of two, who never lov'd one ?
Let her be—the child, whose kiss as a sister's was
mine :

And my fancy comes back to the light of a summer
sun

Two hours down, and the group of girls who twine
Soft arms round each other, and walk, and talk of
the day that is done.

They pass me as I sit here ; the sisters are fair ;
One little face looks up, all radiant with smiles—
Leila, the darling child ! her ringlets of auburn hair
Blown over her wistful eyes, those sunniest isles
Of a light I love—an eloquence soft and rare.

I smile to think of the world's common habit and use
Of its purest gifts ; I laugh at the laugh I hear :
O sweet summer day when I found a ready excuse
To lead her away hand-in-hand, enchanting her ear
With the lightest of jests, through the woods, in their
joys profuse !

That dear little hand, confidingly laid in mine—
Was it slower to sin thenceforth for the spell of a touch
so pure ?

How happy we were, and gay, in the shade of the
sombre pine—

The king of a wood not our own—trespassing sure !

We cancell'd the years from my life, Leila, that were
not thine.

And she who dwelt in my musings first, whose face,
Delicately fair, pass'd and repass'd in my dreams—

She too has curls which kiss at the wind's embrace

The rosy cheek where the light of consciousness
gleams—

The flush of her wakening maidenhood, divine in its
grace.

I wish'd to speak of her in words to which I might
turn

When the peace of these days was fled, and the selfish
roar

Of winter-days was around me again—to find in the
urn

Of the past some memories sweet—to think on this
life's dim shore,

How wondrous fair are some that come, and go, and
never return.

Am I morbidly sad, am I foolishly gay—am I right
or wrong

To muse for a hundred hours on profitless themes?

Why do we passionately yearn to hear once again the
song

Which we know will never be sung again, except in
our dreams?

Why do we dwell on passionless days, we who toil in
the throng?

Where should we be, O Christ ! if we might not rest
Travel-stained on the road—to wonder and gaze, to
adore

The marvels of beauty above us—to see ourselves blest
With the things we love in the future to which we pass
on evermore?

Let me die if I may not look on the sun, as I follow
my life-long quest !

Sisters they were, whom the world had not dared to
stain as yet,

Sisters in ways of life, in thought, and in tender grace,
And the love that reign'd at home had disdain'd to set

Between them and life as it is the pitiful maxims and
base

Which make out of women mischievous fools, weaving
the devil's net.

As over the darkening sea, through the evening mist,
I have watch'd in the purple gloom a chaplet of stars
And yearn'd towards one, the brightest, like a pale
amethyst

Melting away into colour, and chaining with silvery
bars

Its floating light and my captive eyes—lovers
stealthily kiss'd—

As I singled from many but one, though all were
equally fair,

And lost in its brightness the others, so dwelling thus
long

On the cluster of maiden sisters, its absence made
me aware

That I lov'd to look oftener on one sweet face, and
felt as a wrong

The law of the world which made us strange, with
spirits confluent as air.

And this is my fancy to-night, since the world laughs
down

All gentle and holy whispers of days like these,
Until we risk being thought, as the dusty clown,
The thing which we seem and are not : for who that
sees

This endless masquerade believes in the jewell'd crown

Which we jealously keep for hours pluck'd from the
strife—

Hours of wondrous intercourse of mind with mind,
Hours of thought, conceiving, in mighty creations rife,
Hours of love that leave all voices of earth behind,
Hours of this our existence, not mock'd by the name
of life ?

To chase from the mirror of thought a crowd of forms,
And faces of many I love not,—to bid arise
That gentle maiden flow'r ; and the picture warms
As the soul's delight changes to sunset-skies
The clouds that hung in the back-ground, threatening
storms.

She rose at my call ; and her face like a fixèd star
Shone in the dusk ; mute, she read from the page
Of the inspiration that hath no voice, but burneth
afar—

Leading our souls as the sons of a far-off age
Were led by the light of God in its cloudy car—

Read me a story old, such as many have read,
The tale of my own short life, its light and its shade ;
And I listen'd until the gloom of my musings fled,
And I understood that the worker within had made
Ready her place in the temple,—and thus we were wed :

My soul and her memory : there, no taint of the world
can come,
No dust from the desert of sin to mar what is fair and
pure ;
The angels of God look in at the door of that sacred
home,
Where all that is lovely in life from evil dwelleth
secure,
And the star of a light celestial gems on its golden
dome.

Thither I come, unmark'd of babbling tongues, and
of eyes
Which roam in the dark for carrion food ; ev'n I,
released
Awhile from the heavy armour in which we fight for
the wise
And the true and the fair in the fields whose din has
ceas'd—
The fields of battling life—when the daughters of
Night arise.

To the chamber of sleep the temple of beauty led,
And the curtain-folds now close on the silver vail ;
In that temple I plac'd the Past of the sainted dead,
The presence of kindred souls, and the lovely frail
Genius of song—seven stars round her crownèd head.

Each had its place, and none took from my life an
hour
Giv'n before to another : art thou at peace
With the lilies and palms and myrrh, my sweet pale
flow'r
I cull'd by the summer waves,—or should I release
Thy remembrance again ? neither thou nor I have the
pow'r.

Nay, dwell with thy sisters of beauty, my bright sea-
pearl,

If thou findest thy love, it shall hardly rob me of thee,
For the light of thy purity gleams on the brand of the
veriest churl

Who wars with the wrong in the world, to keep virtue
free ;

For such as thou art we blazon'd the banner we never
shall furl.

Dwell with thy sisters, sweet Memory,—dwell in the
light

Of that passionate love for the perfect and pure, the
divine—

Dwell with my soul's own darling when out of the
night

Comes the life that shall beat for ever and ever with
mine,

And the measureless years roll round us—seas of
eternal delight.

THE VOYAGE HOME.

BOUNDING o'er summer-waves,
Listing in ocean-caves
 Mermaiden calling,
Where the sun's lightning paves
The fields that his glory laves,
 Splendidly falling ;

Under the changeful shade
I and my love were laid
 From the white pinions cast
Of the fleet bark which made
Clouds faint and jewel-spray'd
 Fly like dim spirits past.

Home from the Grecian isles,
Westward o'er purple miles
 Of dark seas flowing ;

Past ancient ruin'd piles,
Amber-wreath'd in sunset smiles
Crimsonly glowing,

Under a moon white-ring'd,
Like a bird homeward-wing'd,
North returning—
While from harps deftly string'd
Came songs fairy-fling'd
From th' horizon burning.

Cutting her track of light
Into the brilliant night,
Flew the bark onward,
Till in the farthest height
The South's stars thick and white
Faded sunward.

Gone were the halcyon days,
Fleet as the crested rays
On billows bound leeward,
We spent mid the wither'd bays
Of lands sadd'ning as the haze
That wept seaward :

Lands of a witching clime,
Old in story, old in rhyme,
 Losing, O never,
That spirit of the ancient time,
Welling from their earliest prime
 A bliss for ever :

Back to a strange sad world
Nearer every wave that curl'd
 Bore us, drifting—
Light winds from Corinth hurl'd
Rings of foam against the furl'd
 Rainclouds lifting

All along the distant shores,
As the daylight slowly draws
 Over sea and main—
Following the eternal laws,
Pacing, innocent of cause,
 Westward again.

Lost are those Tyrian dyes,
Faded those turquoise skies,
 Blotted with tears ;

Still in my darling's eyes
The stars seem again to rise
That shone on those years.

Kings with no greater pride
Back from their north-sea ride
Bore their prize of old,
Than I brought home my bride,
Aimë the violet-ey'd
With sunny hair and gold.

Each day when aureole flame
The gate-ways o' the night became
O'er the western brine,
The flooding fires wreath'd the same
Cloudland, and lit a name—
Aimë, 'twas thine.

O that we found in life
Less of the noise and strife
That saddens us all !
Hailing war to the knife
With a mockery of drum and fife,
And trumpet-call !

O that the spirit of dreams
Would make life what it seems
 In ravishing hours,
When all the woodland streams
With the music of sunny gleams
 And voices of flow'rs !

When the old desire returns
And the soul intensely yearns
 Heavenward to rise
By the starlit road where burns
From a million golden urns
 The fire of paradise !

Aimë, wild love for thee,
Told to the sorrowing sea,
 Night after night,
Brought these sad thoughts to me
In a passionate reverie
 Of strange delight.

Aimë, my angel-bride !
Bid the deep rushing tide
 Tell the white ring-dove

In my home by the river-side,
How thou, the tender-eyed,
Com'st to thy rest, love :

Bid it tell the white-wreath'd sand ;
Summer-woods along the strand
Look for thy coming ;
From the north—a silver band—
The river comes, thro' all the land
A love-song humming.

Under a summer-dome,
Golden-blue, thy happy home
Nestles green-diadem'd ;
Thither bear us, winds, that roam
O'er the singing southern foam
Of waters diamond-gemm'd !

There, Aimë, thou shalt rest ;
All that of life is best
Aiding thee with noblest zest
In one endeavour :

One desire fills my breast—
That when in the golden west
The sun of life shall leave its quest,
The close of thine may find thee blest
For ever and for ever !

MY TOWER.

COLD shone the winter stars
 In the clear December night ;
 I, worn with the watch that mars
 The strength of to-morrow's fight,
 Closèd the burthen'd leaf,
 And breath'd a pray'rful sigh—
 That the present weight of grief
 Might lighten, ere I die !

Far away in the Past
 I built me a lordly tow'r,
 Safe, I held, from the blast
 Of the coming untried hour,—
 Safe in the wintry days
 When heart and soul are ice,
 And Prayer can hardly raise
 Her morning sacrifice.

Fair was my tower to see,
On a mountain near the clouds ;
The eagles came to me
Up there in the windy shrouds
Of the vast deep-sounding skies,
And the midnight tempests' stèven
Clomb, and the winds with cries
From the uttermost parts of heaven

Met, strewing the starry stairs
With the wrecks of shatter'd storms,
Till the moon brought balmier airs,
Sea-voices, and blithe forms,
O'er the gleaming watery plains
With her summer crescent-car :
Right over my tower reigns
A solitary star !

Night lit her circle of fire
Over the tumbling seas ;
And landward, higher and higher,
Folded the misty leas
With her shroud of a darken'd vault,
Fading the glimmering West ;

And the loud tide, weary and halt,
Slipt again from the rocks to rest.

Day shot a shaft from the deep,
Breath'd on the sleeping hills,
Wreathing the banner'd keep
With purple and golden rills
Of the rich-hued Eastern dawn,
Deep'ning in flaming glory :
So the day and the night were born
From my tower's upmost story.

I and my soul from that height
Look'd forth on to the world ;
Not a beacon that burn'd at night,
Not a vapour that upward curl'd,
But show'd us the presence of man,
And the marvellous net that he wrought
Round the earth of the Lord, and the plan
Of the kingdom of human thought.

O the wild desire to live
When faith was so mighty, and strong

The heart to give and forgive,
To sever the right and the wrong !
The wish to be gone to the front,
To tread where the Great have trod,
And of war to bear the brunt
With the pioneers of God !

What though the waking be cold—
The dream was a glorious dream ;
'Twas the jealous wind that told
The white-arm'd nymphs of the stream
Were only shadows of clouds
Snowily sailing in heaven :
The world which a dream enshrouds
For the teaching of many was given.

The court-yard of my tower,
Squared in the marble rock,
Was bright with many a flower ;
Gay hedges of hollyhock
Tamarisk-edg'd to the sea
Made nests for the gulls and gleds ;
To the south—a grim fir-tree
And lilies in crescent beds.

Four doors I built to my house,
One to each of the winds :
When the wild north wind hunts close,
And the great north light discends
With its nightly flaring arc
The vault of icy skies,
I watch from my gate the dark,
And the passions of scorn arise.

Scorn for a little world,
And the men who make it small,—
Who keep old banners furl'd,
And cover life with a pall,—
Cramm'd in their dusty marts :
And I would that the great strong North
Could wake but a million hearts,
When its clarion-blast goes forth.

That to the West was white,
Of marbles with purple veins ;
There the jessamine talk'd all night
With the delicate summer rains ;
Pillars of Corinth form
Shadow'd the porch at eve ;

When sunset airs blew warm
My soul went there to grieve.

The eastern gate stood wide
For the bridegroom of the morn,
When he came to kiss his bride
And shower all the lawn
With blossoms for her train :
O sun, how thou didst burn !
O Hope, come back again !
O days—return, return !

Through the sunny southern sward
A little stream did purl ;
And I lov'd to wake the chord—
Under arches of dim pearl
That held the southern porch—
Of my sweet-ton'd lyre at noon,
And watch th' enchanted perch,
And the large white roses swoon.

Within was a lofty hall,
Deep-window'd, balconied

Wherefrom light steps did fall
To a rockery crimson-dyed
With mosses coral and fern :
And the sound of waterfalls
All night did climb and yearn
Round the faint discernèd walls.

Herein I dwelt at ease,
Carving a destiny—
As men by slow degrees
Far-distant shores descry :
I shaped divine desires
And dreamt them all fulfill'd,
And altars built for fires,
As only Youth can build.

They blaz'd upon the mountains,
On Eternity's frontiers,
They smoked beside the fountains
In the valleys of the years :
Bright beacons, burn for ever
Along the midnight sky,
Till this soul and body sever—
Then light me hence, and die !

Yet wondrous was the passion
And wondrous the design
Wherewith my soul did fashion
The glories that did shine
In the chambers of my palace,
In wreaths of radiance—
As in a golden chalice
The lights are seen to dance.

O living fair effulgence—
Rare miracles of art,
With what a fond indulgence
Ye steep'd a yielding heart !
O music of the morning,
O slumber-laden breeze—
Whence came the daily warning
With the twilight of the seas !

Of carven woods most fragrant
Were the rich walls inlaid ;
Faint odorous airs hung vagrant
In the whispering arcade :
On fairest panels painted
My soul her brilliant dreams,—

Her visions of the Sainted,
Her thoughts of Eden's streams.

In one a fair youth knelt
Alone in a sacred gloom ;
His helm and sword and belt
Lay near him on the tomb
Which was his altar there :
With tears and mental strife
He raised for light his prayer
In the warfare of his life.

The din did seem to grow
And denser clouds to rol
Where mid a flying foe—
Their city-gates his goal—
On victory's swift road
His host the warrior led ;
Like the dark whirlwind he rode
Over mountains of the dead.

Anon, a council ; met
In difficult times—the sound

Of shouting which did set
More eloquent light around
The face of him that spake
The wingèd words of pow'r—
Whose mighty soul did make
Obey the pregnant hour.

And there were painted there
In never-fading hues
The records fresh and fair
Of deeds which like the dews
Of summer nights make green
Waste places and waste hearts ;
The greatness felt, unseen,
That love to life imparts.

His work who maketh light
Where the sun shineth not—
Giveth the blind their sight,
And for praise pineth not ;
Her love who cherisheth
Something nobler than the strife
Of fashion's hour which perisheth,
Wearing the rose of life.

Souls of the mighty Dead
Shared my life's solitude ;
Graven in stone I read
Each poet's subtle mood
Working within the man ;
Each toiler for the race,
Each thinker who began
To meet error face to face.

Not an art that could refine,
Not a virtue that could grace,
Not a gem from beauty's shrine,
Not a star from heaven's face—
But dwelt in dim reflex
In those mirrors of the soul,
Waiting till th' horizon's specks
Draw into the Future's whole.

Though many die, nor find
The prescience of their years fulfill'd,
'Tis something that the mind
Can so conceive and build
The lofty guardian fane,
Sunlit from end to end,

Wherein truths never wane,
Whereto all life should tend.

There is a complement to life
That dwelleth erst alone ;
Unaided in its sandy strife
The river had not known
The sounding seas at last :
The soul hath its desire—
No more than cycles rolling past,
Those deathless yearnings tire.

A voice within the veil
Chaunteth the Future's hymn ;
So the faint-scented gale
Moving through vapours dim
Betrays the happy isles :
O voice, we follow thee !
Burst on us with thy smiles,
O Eden of the sea !

I move within the cloud,
Orb'd round by hidden things ;

I hear within the shroud
The motion of their wings :
To him that hath been blind
The flash and jet of light
Comes up upon the wind
And starreth all his night.

Ever at even-tide,
When over shelving seas
The white mist like a bride
Traileth her draperies—
When round the ivied walls
Shadows and gleamings flit,
Heark'ning the forest calls,
On the tower-roof I sit.

I hear a human voice,
Soft as the west wind's tone,
Bidding my heart rejoice ;
I feel a music blown
From footsteps in the lilies—
The starry heights come nigher :
Far-off among the vallies
The river trails its fire.

A voice, a footstep, and the touch
 Of hands in empty chambers ;
 Eyes unto eyes love-dreaming, such
 Life's afterglow remembers :
 Spring woos the happy earth,
 The queens of summer walk in state,
 My soul exults in newer birth
 And soars to meet its mate.

Lord of the Infinite
 Who gavest of thine own
 Glory and love and light,
 To reap where Thou hadst sown ;
 Did not Thy universe
 Burst into flow'r and song
 What time my soul did hear rehearse
 Thy praise the starry throng !

.

Where is the winter-night,
 Though here the wearier pain ?
 The Past goes out of sight,
 The day begins again :
 Blurr'd is the vacant leaf,
 Heavier the upward sigh

That the present weight of grief
May lighten ere I die.

Was it a ruinous pride,
Was it the strength that fail'd,—
A sickly faith, that died
When furious foes assail'd ?
Terrible storms arose :
Waste are the happy fields,
The tide's dominion grows,
The fortress slowly yields.

Light fall the ills of life
Upon the brave and pure ;
But feller than th' assassin's knife
The snake that doth allure
A slumb'ring soul to lie,
Coil'd in its human arc :
O mystery of mystery !
O darkness of that dark !

Where are the stately hopes
That lighted up the world ?

Are they even as the flashing ropes
To wrecking vessels hurl'd ?
To rescue from the gulf of Time
The hours rushing by ?
Not less a future more sublime
Waits on eternity.

Frail are the strongest here,
And few are beauty's hours :
Lord ! if the leaflets sere
From these fair garden-bow'rs
Have taught me only this—
That 'Thou alone art Truth,
I mourn no more the siren kiss
That seal'd away my youth.

If I with light did err,
Quench not that light ! if that fair fane
Betray'd, became a sepulchre,
Have I not worn the chain ?
'Tis sad to fail and fall
When most we seem to climb :
'Retrieve the Past,' He seems to call
From out a distant time.

The buried years are few
To those which lie before :
O Thou ! whose days are ever new,
Whose love is more and more—
Thou can'st a good evolve
From wrecks of noble things ;
Bring back one high resolve,
And fans of angels' wings !

Thine is this rain of tears,
Thine is this breaking heart,
Thine are the waiting years,
Thine all my nobler part !
Forgive, O Lord, the sin,
Come down in all Thy power—
Once more pour Thy great glory in
The gateways of my Tower !

A REMEMBRANCE.

THE evening died into the night,
 The spirit of the night arose
 And fill'd the room : she, fair and white,
 Pass'd, wrapt in sad repose.

She did not speak ; I only saw
 The dream-like motion of her form,
 She mov'd within a sacred awe—
 The air grew sweet and warm.

There came a voice on lowly wings
 From out a distant corner dim ;
 A voice one dreams that earthward sings
 From harp of Seraphim.

So exquisite a tenderness,
So low, so conscious, frail and sweet,
It clung about her hair and dress,
And nestled at her feet.

It may have been a common tone,
But all of her that was divine
Did seem to touch, and make her own
Each note that left its shrine.

It drew me as the heavens draw
The sunless deep, until I stood
Beside her where she sat, and saw
Beneath a silken snood

The waves of rippling gold that flow'd
From either brow into the night,
And on her saintly forehead glow'd
Most radiant gems of light.

O little head divinely-shaped,
Mute fringes of deep-dreaming eyes,
What spirit from its heav'n escaped
Speaks in those tender sighs?

Those small soft hands from warm white keys
Caress more soothing harmonies
Than sing the shells of twilight-seas
 Beneath the summer skies.

O let not pass this hour, nor cease
The music that I love so well,
But let me feel thy perfect peace
 And slumber in thy spell.

Child, lay thy life within my love,
That shining head upon my breast,
Leave thy lone wand'rings, little dove,
 Fold thy white wings and rest.

Ah ! many joys have fall'n asleep
And pass'd, between that hour and this :
Blest were the tears which she did weep,
Pure as the pearl beneath the deep
 That one divinest kiss !

LONG AGO.

ONE evening of those days of perfect peace
 Which link the summer to the fall of leaves,
 I lay upon the hill whose shoulder heaves
 To sea-ward yonder, till the full tide drave
 With thunder up the chalk, and from the eaves
 Of clouds which hung the West with golden fleece
 The first sweet stars look'd on the Autumn wave.

Singly they flash'd and wan'd, those beauteous lights,—
 The vestal watchers of the sunless skies ;
 And when the evening folded, and mine eyes
 Wander'd from depth to depth of stars untold,
 Methought : as those first planets which did rise
 Excel in beauty, of those shining heights
 The lesser glories, so some women walk the world.

No words of mine could add to her sweet fame,
A fame less of the face than of the heart ;
So rich in rumours of her that we start
At the mere mention of her name, and mov'd
By contemplation of her work, depart
To marvel at her life's most lowly aim,—
In quiet ways to make herself belov'd.

Fair is the opening rose of June, and dear
The beauty of that world which greets us then,
A voice to call us from the haunts of men,
Something to love we knew not of before :
How far diviner she and dearer when
The light of her calm being shineth clear
Around a face we love for evermore !

Some lives are noise and battle : her's is still,
And holy as the twilight of the moons
Of summer, when the last gleam swims and swoons
In water'd hollows, and the winds are laid ;
No dream is she of sultry southern noons,
But pure as yon cold star above the hill,
While gently pass her young years into shade.

Her eyes burn not with fire that leaves a pain
Of passion miss'd, when they no longer sway ;
But, like the light of sweet times gone away,
They look a world of kindness all their own ;
And when she speaks, it seems as if the may
Bloom'd whiter, and the Spring prolong'd her reign,
To breathe the music of that tender tone.

All things did seem to love her : might not love
Be giv'n to some, as beauty, wealth, or fame ?
But this I know, that whencesoe'er it came,
Love seem'd to dwell upon her stainless brow,
And to that fair abode did urge no claim
Than that it did beseem her, so she wove
The spells of earthly love—and knew not how !

The touch of love had fir'd her glorious hair—
Entwinèd starlights in a crown of braids :
I saw her pass among the untress'd maids
One morning when the streaming sunlight made
A shining splendour of its golden shades,
And seas that trembled to the singing air
Flash'd living light that round her features play'd.

Or, when the ripples woo'd the evening sands
To sleep within their soft caress till dawn,
Upon a rock-seat, green with lichens, worn
By time and tempest from the sandstone-wall,
She sat alone, and twin'd the seaweeds, torn
From gardens under sea, about her hands,
And watch'd the West grow purple, and the shadows
 fall.

Then would I marvel if she lov'd the shells,
The white gulls, and the voice of that great sea
More than the world whose voice she seem'd to flee ;
Or did she find a consolation lie
In these for that dread doom of living—she
Avoided not, in days when grief excels
And it is loss to love, and hard to die !

One moment would I dream if she would sell
The marvellous enchantment of her life
And its lone sweetness to be callèd wife ;
The kisses of the winds upon her cheek
For kisses that with kisses should wage strife,
The sea-weed's stories for those love could tell,
The sea-shell's murmurs for those love could speak ?

The sunset which thou gazest on will fade ;
The silver wavelets, ling'ring round thy feet,
Will roar to-night above thy rocky seat,
The sea-weed and the shell shall be forgotten :
O darling, will the dawning rise less sweet
To eyes to sleep by lover's kisses laid,
And poppy-heads from love's own garden gotten ?

She will not speak, but gazes on the sea,
As if she saw a world beyond the sun ;
Then slowly come the tear-drops one by one
From the full heart of life—tremble, and fall :
'The night passeth away,' she saith, 'and none
Who hope the heav'nly Bridegroom's face to see
Have any part in love till He shall call.'

Are there no wedded angels ? Why are we
So human that we may not heav'n attain,—
So angel-like we may not banish pain
With joys that make earth heav'n a little while ?
The tears of ages this have ask'd in vain :
Yet as the clouds melt in the eastern sea,
Her sorrow breaks into a sad sweet smile.

True to her faith, she will not hold me base
For that I did not see her heav'n-white wings ;
But only woman, fairer than all things
That live and love within earth's Eden-vallies :
She talks of visions when the West-wind sings,
That bring a message to each sadden'd face
From Him who bade her watch and tend His lilies.

IN MEMORIAM.

A. D.

NOV. XV. MDCCCLXIX.

HE did not tell us ere he went
 That we should see his face no more ;
 Nor, if a message had been sent
 To him from Heaven's open door,
 Did he make any sign before
 The vessel sail'd.

He left his happy English home
 As one that went to win a crown ;
 He smil'd, and said he should not come
 Again till he had earn'd renown—
 Brave heart ! he reck'd not that his own
 Pray'r had prevail'd.

When on the hills of morning-land
We do not wish our friends good-night ;
And I, the last to press his hand
Before he vanish'd from our sight,
Could see no shadow dim the light
Of his true eyes.

Noble of heart, he was the heir
Of honour in his father's name ;
The future lay before him fair—
Happy the years that went and came,
Until he went to crown his fame
'Neath other skies.

White wings that swept the silver seas
Could not outsail the flying years ;
But letters set her heart at ease,
And chased away prophetic fears,
And dried a mother's secret tears—
Thinking of Thee !

Until we heard o'er half the world
How thou, beneath the Southern Cross,
Hadst England's battle-flag unfurl'd,

Where revolution's red waves toss—
And sav'd the weak from harm and loss,
Still, conscience-free.

And honour from his native land
Went out to meet him on his way ;
And, touching at the Indian strand,
He wrote and nam'd that unborn day
For which no more her lips may pray—
Of his return.

The year was dying here at home,
But love should light the winter dim ;
They talk'd of joys when he should come,
And happy days in store for him :
But he will hear no Christmas-hymn
In his last bourn.

Upon the threshold of the door
They stood to meet him, when that blow
Fell, like the doom they preach in store
To whelm a world in sudden woe :
Ah, well ! the tears began to flow—
God's will be done !

Beneath the flaming tropic sky
The fever smote him, and he fell ;
We thought he was too young to die,
The mind of God we could not tell :
He smil'd, and said that all was well—
Christ knew His own.

A glimpse along his finish'd life,
A pray'r that God might make it pure,
A hope that in the coming strife
His best belov'd ones might endure
And meet him on that further shore
Beyond this gloom :

Few words and simple, as become
The great and brave : then came the end.
'Few days may be of life the sum,
'But a good name shall live and blend
With deathless time '—these words defend
His cross and tomb.

O noble heart ! rest thou in peace
Beside the ever-singing wave ;
The weeping clouds shall never cease

To tend the flowers on thy grave :
Such sleep as thine who would not crave
'Mid such a scene ?

And all the sweet West winds that move
Shall waft thy name across the deep ;
And while we live, our hope of love
In worlds where love no more shall weep,
And fond affection here shall keep
Thy memory green !

THE MAGDALENE.

LORD, I have need of Thee ;
 Bend Thy lov'd eyes, and see
 My continuing misery !

Far in the misty years
 My life's lone track appears,
 Water'd with many tears.

Still the slow sands of Time
 Deepen under skies sublime ;
 Life itself becomes a crime.

Lord, I have lov'd Thy name,
 Breathing sweetness when it came—
 Fanning life's low altar-flame.

Yea, Lord, in darkest hours,
Bound slave to alien pow'rs—
I have thought on Zion's tow'rs.

Knowing that my life's desire
Could not die in passion's fire,
Knowing it was something higher.

Praying that the strife might cease ;
Thou, Lord, canst grant release—
I am weary : give me peace !

Weary of the present pain ;
Every conflict seems in vain ;
Old sins come back again.

Old faces throng my dreams,
Old songs haunt all the streams,
Shadows vex the sunset-gleams.

Shadows of the days ago ;
And an ancient song of woe
Far up the river's flow.

Memory beckoneth with her hand,
Voices fill the outer land,
Darkness falls upon the sand.

Toiling in the night alone,
Still I hear a bitter tone
Making answer to my moan :

‘ Trouble not the Saviour more ;
Waves upon the dreary shore
Drown thy knocking at the door.

‘ Life is over : and the light
Faded from thy mortal sight :
Wander ever in the night.’

Yet I will not heed the scorn,
Neither let the shades forlorn
Hide from me the star of morn.

O my Christ ! Thy royal head
Had not droop’d in woe, nor bled
Where all worlds have worshippèd,

But that in the after years
They whose hearts the Tempter sears
Might reap interest of Thy tears !

Lengthen out my mortal arc,
That these eyes Thy Cross might mark,
Somewhere standing in the dark !

Haply if a wind might rise,
Blow a rift in yonder skies,
And woo a star from Paradise !

Shine from out thy blissful home,
Light a track athwart the gloom—
Promise of a happier doom !

Guide my feet across the flood,
Bound with chains and wet with blood,
Nearer to the Cross of God !

High above the torrent's roar,
It stands, O Christ, upon the shore :
Here let me be for evermore !

Bind Thy thorns about my brow :
Rapt in pain and sorrow now,
Keep me to my holy vow !

Let me hear no voice but Thine,
No form upon the darkness shine
Save the Cross mine arms entwine !

Sweet is sadness, sweeter pain—
Thro' long ages sought in vain
Sweetest—love when found again.

Saviour ! guard me thro' the night :
Softly sleeping in Thy sight—
Let me die, and wake in light !

A FIRESIDE DREAM.

I sit alone before my fire,
Stealthily fall the snows without :
What hath the wind to talk about ?
I cannot hear its low desire,
But feel a kindness in its tone :
Perchance it knows I am alone.

Song of the many-valley'd hills !
Mocking the silence of their streams :
Heap softest fleeces o'er the dreams
Of violet-banks beside the rills !
Waiting, as they, for Spring to thaw
The life that sleeps thro' Winter's war.

'Twere well, methinks, to be at peace,
Like yonder deeply-laden fields :
To find a house beneath the wealds,

Thereof to take a lengthened lease,
And lie among the springs of life—
 Tho' strange to all their after-strife.

The snail upon the window-pane
 Taps downward to its chamber soon :
 Fast fades the ailing afternoon,
And from the church above the lane
That winds among the woodland wells
 I hear th' alternate voice of bells.

Why chime they to the deafen'd dusk ?
 It is not well, I know, to fret ;
 It is not well with tears to wet,
When life is out, the empty husk :
But when those bells are chiming there
 Sometimes we wish we were not here.

They cease : that were not needed though ;
 We use ourselves to sadder things
 Than sounds of bells on windy wings :
Meek fallen head that liest low—
Great tides of Thought no walls may dam
 Do chaunt thine ' in memoriam ' !

The surface of the seething burn
 Soon settles to its usual calm ;
 And we who storm may find a balm
In waiting until peace return :
The evenness of tearful fate
 Is seen by those who, bearing, wait.

Man was not made for solitude,
 He fears himself within himself ;
 He fears lest fancy's wanton elf
Should shadows build, with life endued,
And make them all his world,—he fears
 The alien laugh, and lonely tears.

And this is why we long, in youth,
 For glimpses of that time to come
 When some dear life shall make its home
With us, and find it happy truth—
That he lives least to self alone
 Whose love into his life hath grown.

The glories of the summer born
 Are mantled by yon snow-drifts white :
 Why did they ever see the light—

To lie so low and so forlorn?
Perhaps the love we bear the rose
Is stronger than the rose we lose !

And so the seasons of the mind
Revolve, and so pass into shade
Some blessings, and for that they fade
Perchance we prize them more, and find
The charm in visions memory weaves
That lingers in dead scented leaves.

What truly doth the Past enfold?
Some deeds which might have been more free
From ev'n the taint of calumny—
Some disappointments, and some gold,
Garner'd anent a holier time
When requiem-bells shall cease to chime.

Let not regret for vanish'd days
Come in between thy work and thee ;
They bore their burthen,—let them be :
If briars have o'ergrown the ways,
Clear forwards : nothing is in vain,
And what has been may be again.

'Tis nearly dark, my easy-chair
Looms large and sombre on the wall :
To-night both wind and snow will fall,
To-morrow will be still and fair.

.
Ho ! *Arthur's Knights* lie close to hand,
I'll ride with them in Broceliande !

As masses of dissolving snow
Pause on a mountain-ledge before
They plunge a torrent evermore
Down one of several valleys—so
We choose our stream from some high crown,
And send our reveries sailing down.

Lo here, three worlds ! I could set free
The music of untrodden days,
Wage wars victorious, and raise
Such visions of the times to be !
But care not now for fancy's glow,
Lest after-hours should sadder grow.

I could keep quiet watch within
The circle of my firelight's gleam,
While busy icicles redeem

All that the short-liv'd noon did win ;
And higher mounts the drift, and night
Makes cheerier, holier—warmth and light.

Or, leaving both the present peace,
And wistful gazing forwards, I
Could hear beneath a summer sky
A noise among the woods increase,
And silver bugles wind, to bring
His errant knights about the King.

Who doth not die to time, and live
In pages of the tale he reads ?
Tho' knowing that—as all the creeds
Are but one cry to Heav'n to give
A world's desire—all tales but tell
The same old truths we know so well.

Yet we may find relief from pain,
Some duty set in clearer light,
In seeing with another's sight
How men the ends of life may gain :
A kindred kindness warms the blood,
We feel the tie of brotherhood.

So mused I, staring at the fire—
My hand betwixt the falt'ring leaves—
 Then dash'd beneath the oaken eaves,
And laugh'd to feel the wind aspire
To check my course unto the meres
 Where Arthur camp'd with fifty spears.

Blithe-hearted song of chivalry !
 We lend most willing ears to thee,
.. Because thy noblest things shone free
From tangled webs of sophistry :
And life was life, and love was love,
 And he was best who best did prove.

I saw them all beside the lake—
 The men of that sweet-fabled time ;
 I saw, outstretched beneath the lime,
The King, and heard the words he spake :
His face was toward the setting sun,
 His own great years then nearly run.

I saw the golden-flooded plains,
 The velvet vales of Avalon ;
 An agèd harper woke upon

That silence music's softest strains :
And far and near love's sweet distress
 Yearn'd over Nature's loveliness.

But when the summer-moon did rim
 The lake's far verge with diamond light
 There rose a sound upon the night
Of banqueting ; and outlines dim
Of lofty towers hid the stars,
 And brake the water's silver bars.

And in that hour of open heart
 Around the mighty-flagon'd wine
 A sudden radiance did shine
Where crimson'd curtains mov'd apart,
And enter'd, after herald calls,
 The queen of those enchanted halls.

King Arthur rose with all his knights,
 She sweetly bade them welcome all,
 And pass'd into the throngèd hall,
Her maidens round her, like the lights
Attendant on the queen of heav'n
 That gem th' Ionian skies at ev'n.

And slowly from that brilliant page
The actors faded into dream,
And all about the night did stream
The music of that wondrous age ;
And lightly laughing voices rang,
And wild and sweet the songs they sang.

And old as sweet, the sweetest theme
That ever breath'd from poet's lyre,
Or touch'd with inspiration's fire
The voices of life's Spring, did seem
To woo the happy stars above
In trembling utterances of love.

And every knight was nobly nam'd,
And every shield was spotless there,
For those they serv'd were pure as fair :
And o'er the royal pavilion flam'd
Above the standard's silken swoon
The golden cross beneath the moon.

And still in every changing scene
That swept across the shadow'd land,
Where lay the sleeping warrior-band,

The pale sweet face of that same queen—
Like moonlight over seas withdrawn—
 Brooded above the mists of Dawn.

.

O wind that from the cedar shakes
 The snow's soft lace-work to the ground !
 Art thou a voice or but a sound ?
A voice from out the Past that breaks
To tell us how the dead do fare—
 The dead world which we read of there ?

A world so dead—it never was ;
 But that which caus'd the dream did live :
 Wind of a thousand winters ! give
The ghosts of eld, whose slumber has
Its waking when 'Thou sweep'st the main,
 A tongue to tell their loves again !

A voice comes singing from the mists
 That wrap the cloud-lands of the Past :
 Why unto us who love, the last,
That song on sweetness still insists ?
It is the human tones which move,
 It is the present dearth of love.

Are we not human yet, and thrill
To touches of that fairy wand ?
Or tremble to the soft command
To seek out something sweeter still
Than any joy we light upon
Which finds and leaves us still alone ?

From every dawn to every night
We toil to live, and toiling, think
How far we may be from the brink
Of that Perhaps—which may be light :
Without, creeds change with every breath,
The only certainty is—death.

Come to us, therefore, angel-child,
Thou with the eyes that can endure,
Thou with the snow-white breast, and pure,
Thou with a love-song undefil'd,—
Come when our hearts are soft with sorrow,
Give us a faith to meet the morrow !

Come to us, songs of the summer-time,
Link'd with a message of God divine,
Dropt by the stars with their golden shir

Over a world weary of crime—
Give us the grace of the days of old—
To love, or ever our years be told !

.

I sit alone before my fire—
Ashes that glow in a sudden flame—
And ever between the dreams that came
Over the eyes beginning to tire,
I seem to hear a human tone—
The wind has long since ceased to moan.

Ah ! she is sweet, this phantom fair,
Who glides to the vacant seat behind ;
And brings a longing back to mind,
Touching the keys with a dreamy air :
And steals the senses of the night,
To dream delight,—to dream delight.

Sweet are the eyes which yearn to mine,
Tender the tones that ask for this—
Only a life-time in a kiss

From lovers' lips which cling to thine !

.

The night is past, the stars withdrawn,
And sweet Hope crowns the breaking Dawn.

THREE LETTERS.

I

L'Espoir.

BETWEEN the twilight and the dawn

The foam shines white on summer seas
That plunge all night along the echoing strand ;
And by the moon the glittering tides are drawn,
And by the roughening breeze
The fringes of the surf are strewn along the sand.

The winds and waves are singing, and the song
Is wildly sweet ; and tortur'd by the flame
Of love, they sing of love for which we long,—

They sing a song without a name,
And in a tongue no man may understand.

The poet who hath known her, and hath seen
Her pensive beauty, if in calm or storm,
 May sing of Nature's secrets to a listening world ;
And we who know what her sad voices mean,
And cannot speak it, seek a form
Which her divinest mysteries doth enfold,
And tells us what the angels' words have been :
And finding one so winning, fresh, and fair,
 We look into thy face, and read it there.

Child of unsadden'd memories, might thy heart,
Pure as thine eyes, and free from passion's chain—
 Not scorn the faiths that love thee !
Surely he did no wrong to part
 From thee and thine with pain,
Though far his path from thine as winter stars above
 thee.

Between the twilight and the dawn
 In sleep as sweet as summer seas
That bring God's message to a thirsty land—
 By no kind cruel hand
 Thine image is withdrawn,

But still thy calm fond eyes will haunt my dreams ;
And, sweet as winds which kiss the tops of trees,
The music of thy voice will wander down the streams
Of that one life which is as nothing to thee
Though all the fairest gifts of life should woo thee.

Unknown the Future, and unblest the Past,
I do not ask thee for one gift but this :
That thou wilt come again in dreams, and kiss
 With thy sweet lips the fast
And flowing hours which precede the Dawn :
That with the morning sunlight on the lawn,
Perchance among the flowers I may find
Thy footsteps : and the soft west wind
 Shall yet recall thy memory and my bliss.

2

Au Revoir.

HE wander'd thro' the woods in Spring,
 And read a lay of love ;
 He watch'd the white clouds float above,
And heard the wild birds sing.

He rested by the brooklet's sands,
 He found a violet at his feet,
 He laid it in his pages sweet,
And pass'd to other lands.

He drank deep draughts of life at last,
 But found no pearl within the cup :
 The sorrows of new years brake up
The fragments of the Past.

Then came the longing to return,
 When weary feet refuse to roam,
 The fever for the light of home
When other fires have ceas'd to burn.

He came, forgotten of his own ;
 The sky was darken'd overhead,
 The brook was still, the flow'rs were dead,
The woods forlorn,—the birds were flown.

The wings of no returning dove
 Brought him glad news of Edens lost :
 And on a sea of sadness tost,
He read again his lay of love.

But when the times are wholly rife,
A word will start a fount of tears,
Or wake the phantoms of the years,
And bring desire back to life.

So Memory knit a broken chain ;
He found the violet in its place,
Unchang'd in all its faded grace—
And mid the tears which fell like rain
Came visions of one lovely face,
And in her faithful love's embrace
The Poet found his Past again.

And Thou, fair child with dove-like eyes,
Why should I fable things to thee—
But that thou hast, at least for me,
The secret which within it lies ?

Thou gath'rest shells beside the sea,
And flow'rs by all the babbling streams ;
And wondrous unto thee it seems
That everything hath love for thee.

Like him that wander'd in a land
Where only dead leaves told of love—

Love lost but sought for—did I move
'Mid crowds that would not understand.

I saw thee with thy fairy wand
 Touching all common things with light,
 Fairer than any star of night,
With only garlands in thine hand:

Standing apart from noisy crowds,
 With just a smile for others' joys,
 And pity for life's little toys,
' And just a tear for passing shrouds.

No shadows of life's brief despair,
 No blinding light of blissful days,
 No joy—no sorrow quench'd the rays
Which crown'd for me that vision fair.

And through all changes, sad or blest,
 The world is tender unto thee,
 For thou remainest unto me
Gentler and lovelier than the rest.

And when another day is set,
 And thou unbindest radiant hair,

Wilt say : Since God has made me fair,
What wonder he could not forget ?

And I shall find no other heart
As pure, nor face as sweet as thine ;
And I am glad that this is mine—
To bless thee, if again to part :

If I may chase away my fears,
And find thee free from love's sweet pain,
Thine eyes undimm'd by any tears,
When—rolling back the thronging years,
I look upon thy face again.

3

L'Adieu.

THOUGH thou art dead, and long ago
Our last farewell was said,
Whether the hours be swift or slow,
Rippling with joys, or sad with sighs—
The world's wide beauty overhead,
And at my feet the flowers bright,

Still am I haunted day and night
By thy reproachful eyes.

Methought that I had buried love
In that unquiet grave ;
And thou can'st cage thy wandering dove
Which comes with proffer'd peace to me :
Forgiveness unto thee I gave,
The day of thy too-late despair—
Go—hide away thy face so fair,
I cannot come to thee !

May I not rest now thou art gone ?
Thou would'st not have the love I brought,—
I only ask to be alone :
Since God has giv'n me peace at last,
Come not to see what thou hast wrought ;
My feet are tir'd, my heart is cold—
Go—get thee to thy rest of old,
And sleep in thy dead Past !

DEE-SIDE.

THE river down the valley roams
 Between its wooded shores,
 And all day long it frets and foams,
 All night it raves and roars.
 And Bala lake is dark with cloud,
 The rain is on the hills,
 The mountain-streamlet, babbling loud,
 O'er the shale-ledges spills.

No more a wand'ring thread of light,
 It shines above the glen ;
 The heather-bents are dark as night—
 I hear the heather-hen
 Call to the cock-grouse in the gorse,
 The hawk shriek, and, below,
 Thund'ring along their rocky course,
 The rapids downward go.

Below the bridge the mill-wheel churns
Wild waters into foam ;
The storm across the mountain turns,
 And wand'ring doves fly home :
The sun peeps out behind the rain,
Low down the flaming West,
The evening sky smiles peace again,
 With one star on her breast.

Far up the mountain-side the girl
Is calling to her cows,
And answer'd by the village churl
 Whose flocks the meadows browse :
Perchance to him sweet love to-night
In her dark eyes will shine,
In yonder cottage, gleaming white
 Against the dusky pine.

SWEETHEART.

I LOOK'D into thine eyes, and they were true
 As Spring is to the flowers,—
 Coming with sunshine and the silver dew
 After the whispering showers :
 Mine eyes, sweetheart, would read no other themes
 Than their love-dreams.

I listen'd to thy voice, and it was soft
 As music in the lilies,
 Stirr'd by wild winds which kiss them from aloft—
 Deep in their happy vallies :
 No other joy should woo me late or long
 Than thy sweet song.

I kiss'd thee on thy lips, and they were sweet
 As rose-buds are in June ' .

Sooner the stars that lay about the feet
Of the large harvest-moon
Should tire of the spheres wherein they move
Than we of love !

FALSE AND FAIR.

THE wind blows freshly from the sea,
Wild music fills the air ;
The blithe sea-birds call unto me,
I rise, and roam across the lea,
And sing, because my heart is free—
Tho' she is false and fair.

O sudden pain within my heart
Which gives these lips the lie !
Teach me, sweet pain, before I die,
To veil my sorrow with a smile,—
Or with sad peace my heart beguile
Till I may learn no more to care,
Far from the mocking world apart,
For she is false and fair.

I met her in a dream, last night,
She came with folded hands,
With lips all pale, and face all white,
Across the star-lit sands :

We stood together by the sea,
I ask'd her why she lied to me :
The mighty floods were hurrying by,
The wind was sounding in the sky,
But she vouchsaf'd me no reply :
Her lips were dumb with great despair—
O false and fair ! O false and fair !

What time the morning flushes break
She faded out on God's wide sea ;
For dreams must pass, and we must wake—
The hopes of life like shadows flee ;
Wild words are waste, and tears are vain,
And faith destroy'd comes not again :
But yet the anguish of that sigh
Is somewhere in the singing air—
Last night it moan'd so piteously,
O false and fair ! O false and fair !

And thou, my first love, shining sea !
In storm or calm the same to me—

Come with thy murmuring lullaby
To human hearts which love and die !
For well I know that nevermore
Her form shall haunt the starry shore :
In vain soft eyes shall look despair,
In vain shall Circe bind her hair—
I love no love but thee !
Then moan not wind so piteously,
For they are false as they are fair.

SONG.

I.

SING, happy heart, that hast no sorrows,
 Blithe songs amid thy flowers ;
For life from thee a beauty borrows
 Within thy sunny bowers.

II.

Sing not of love, O happy voice,
 Sing of no sad to-morrow ;
Though love to-day may bid rejoice,
 Love is akin to sorrow.

III.

Who hath not lov'd, hath nothing lost,
 Nor needs to woo its blisses ;
For flow'rs unborn do fear no frost,
 Chaste lips regret no kisses.

IV.

Sing, then, O heart, that hast no pining,—
 Sweetly thy ring-doves call ;
Sing only that God's sun is shining,
 And He is good to all.

SET STARS.

I WAS walking home thro' the lighted streets,
And I thought of my three dead loves—

The last is dead to-day :
In the face of every woman one meets,
To the rustle of every dress that moves,
I look—I listen, to-day.

Dreams within dreams, wheels within wheels,
My fancies are moody and mad,

But each one hath its say :
The north-east hurricane stiffens and steels,
But my thoughts are tender, sober and sad—
My heart is broken to-day.

I pass by the shop in the little street,
They tell me my barber is dead—

He was blithe and well yesterday :

His jokes to me were a daily treat—
I pass his door with a stealthy tread,
The shutters are clos'd to-day.

And further on is the theatre-door,
A crowd stands there in the cold,
As if their hearts were May :
What is it by which they set such store ?
The play I know is dull and old—
Why must they see it to-day ?

I pass, I cross the roaring throng,
I hurry to gain the river-side,
The stars on its bosom play :
A voice from the Past—a sweet wild song
Comes with the lap and lift of the tide
From the sea which is far away.

O for a tongue of force and fire
To speak the thoughts that arise in me
As thy waters flash and play
On the granite steps and never tire !
No tenderness should win me
From grief and death to-day.

My loves are dead ; not left nor lost
In the drift and dross of the past years,
 Like idols gilt and clay :
To-night I know the very worst,
And once for all shall passionate tears
 For an hour have their way.

They have no crowns—my defiled loves,
They are not safe in heaven to-night,
 Nor clad in white array :
But dead in the life which lives and moves,—
And I shall read their hearts in the light
 Of God and the last Day.

SONG.

I.

BIRDIE, sitting on the spray,

Pity me :

I was happy yesterday,

For I had a lover, sweet,

Alas, with wings unto his feet,

Who from me is flown to-day :

Sing to me thy plaintive lay,

And pity me.

II.

Brooklet, babbling o'er thy stones,

Pity me :

I was woo'd in tender tones,

But the voice I fain would hear

Will not answer anywhere ;

Nothing for my grief atones :
Murmur o'er thy mossy stones,
And pity me.

Wandering wind among the trees,
Pity me :
Thou that comest over seas,
Bring to me from thy sweet South
No false kisses for my mouth,
But cure for this fond heart's dis-ease :
Singing o'er the lonely leas
Pity for me.

MY DARLING.

I.

I KISS her whensoever we meet,
 She never says me nay :
 And if folk ask me why—I say,
 Because she is so sweet.

II.

We never quarrel when we rove,
 We never think—sweetheart and I—
 That anything beneath the sky
 Is worth a thought, but love.

III.

A fairer gift God never gave,
 A perfect soul looks through her face :
 And every flow'r that blows shall grace
 My darling's bed and bow'r and grave.

DAISY.

I.

SHE sang a little song to me,
A song of love and kisses :
Not knowing life's reality,
Its pathos still she misses.

II.

She never pluck'd the flower,
She never felt its thorn :
Far be from her that hour
When love with grief is born.

III.

She knoweth not how sweet she is ;
No word from me may move her
To truth as sorrowful as his
Who saith : alas ! I love her.

DEAD LEAVES.

I.

I WOULD have held her very dear,
But she would not have me :
Why should I waste sigh or tear ?

II.

Love is but a sweet delusion,
What art thou that I should crave thee ?
Life and love have their conclusion.

III.

I know one who loves me well,
Her image will not leave me :
Must I wed her ? who can tell ?

IV.

Hence these kisses in profusion :
Fool ! the woman whom God gave thee
Wrought but sorrow and confusion.

ALL IS WELL.

I.

I HAVE cased my heart in stone,
I have loved—I am alone,
Love is come, and love is gone—
All is well.

II.

Every lover tells this truth :
Love is short, and love is ruth,
To-day so warm, to-morrow loth—
But all is well.

III.

Leaves that in the Spring are green
By-and-bye are no more seen,
What is, is not what might have been—
Yet all is well.

IV.

I will no longer try to save
My love from its untimely grave ;
God only took that which He gave—
So all is well.

OLD LETTERS.

It might have been. Does she
In hours of blinding tears
Read what I wrote to her ?
As I, who strive to be
Passionless as the dead years,
Read what time can never blur.

She cannot have forgot :
One is not loved so often
That memory will not speak.
Remembering love that is not,
Her heart must sometimes soften
And tears be on her cheek.

It might have been. If she
As I, ask of that Past

What legacy it leaves us,
Perhaps she would speak unto me
And ask why, at the last,
Love, hopeless, thus bereaves us.

LOTTIE.

COME, Lottie, 'tis no use to pout,
Your lips were made for kisses :
What is it that has put you out ?
Your woe is not what his is.

For you can have what love you will,
Discard disguise and masking :
Why will you make your lover ill
With fretting and with asking ?

Must he a thousand times repeat
What he has said already ?
Were ever eyes so winsome sweet,
Or heart-beats so unsteady ?

How dare you make a mock of love,
And pause to make amends?
I swear my heart no more shall rove,
Come, kiss, and let's be friends.

A QUARTETTE.

I HAD a dream of maidens rare,
I could not tell whom I lov'd best :
Each one of them did seem so fair,
Each lovelier than the rest.

I saw a Lily in a field,
I knew her when she was a child :
One morning wedding-bells were pealed.
And in her place the weeds grew wild.

I saw a tear in Fanny's eye,
I ask'd her if her grief was love :
She only answer'd with a sigh—
Someone had caged my dove.

I thought that Constance was so true,
No lie could lurk in her sweet smile :
But when the times to fulness grew,
She said—two loves suffice awhile.

And at the last pale Margaret
Came, like the radiant morning star :
Said she—the bounds of fate are set,
We seem not what we are.

Shadows and phantoms all, these loves
That only live in feverish dreams :
Believe me, every maid who moves
To passion, is not what she seems.

MARGARET.

I.

ACROSS the waste of waters, ever onward,
Her white wings waft her from these northern strands,
Over the trackless plains she beats to sunward,
Fraught with a thousand hopes to other lands.

II.

The brilliant dawn, the glittering foam,
The wind which sings in the morning—
These are her joys wherever she may roam :
 And the dark tempest scorning,
She walks upon the shining sea,
Rock'd by the gale which bends her lofty spars,
'Thro' storm and calm, still beauteous and still free
Unto her haven 'neath the Southern stars.

III.

But fair and free as are these dreams
They fade before the sober joys—
As moonlight into morning gleams,
As happiness is past which cloy—
Wherewith she ends her blissful flight,
And o'er the weary waste of foam
She sees again the harbour-light
Which hails her to her northern home.

IV.

So the wide bounteous world with ever-changing
Sunshine and cloud woos with a thousand joys ;
And phantoms on the far horizon ranging
Draw our fond hearts from the sweet equipoise
Of hearth and home, to wander whither
These siren voices call, which day and night,
Sing some new song of hope, and thither
We follow with unwearied feet, and sweet delight.

V.

But after dreams comes waking,
And after wandering—rest :

And life of grief partaking
Seeks sleep on love's soft breast.

VI.

So the long chequered years
 Like traversed seas behind me,
Harvesting joys and tears
 Still mournfully remind me
That from these realms of passion and of pain
'I have not won a human heart'—their sad refrain.

VII.

And Thou, whose calm soft eyes survey
The world from sunlit heights of peace,
Seemest to me—who ask to-day
That wanderings so forlorn might cease—
That star which speaks of ended strife,
And draws me—hope too wildly sweet !
Across the weary waste of life
 A captive to thy feet !

THE AWAKENING.

I.

A FAINT light line along the Eastern sea,
And gradual rose-tints on the rolling hills ;
I hear the early cry of birds along the lea,
They tell that night is past,
The longest and the last,
The sorrow that is maddening, and the joy that kills.

II.

She wakes : what wonder in her love-lit eyes !
Her own white arm appals her like a ghost ;
Is any joy like this beneath the skies ?
The happiness which seems
Fled with delicious dreams
Comes slowly daywards from that shadowy host.

III.

Life, love, and time,—faith, fame, and future, all
Is summed up in that consciousness of hers
That she is mine—nor ever can recall,
Save in the mirror of the Past,
With sweet rains over-cast,
A world of loveless loneliness, nor tears.

IV.

And my sweet love, whose breasts are whiter far
Than any snows that crown the virgin hills,
Shall whisper greetings to the morning-star :
And if she ask what love is this,
That wind shall answer with a kiss
Which brings the music of the mountain-rills.

V.

I would my darling might for ever dream
Of love like this beside the whispering sea ;
No blushing bridal-morn should cast its gleam
On her sweet eyes, to sever
One golden chord for ever
Which binds her dear heart unto love and me.

THE BELL-BUOY.

SUNDAY, OCT. XXIV. 1875.

I.

THE North Sea thunders on the fatal reefs,
 But here within the shelter of the bay
 The gentle swell might rock a babe to sleep—
 No more : the sea hath its own griefs,
 And moans, far away,
 Where the white breakers 'gainst the sky-line leap.

II.

A winding path the crag descends ;
 The narrow beach, hard-press'd by winter-storm,
 Dips steeply to the sand :
 The broken circle northward seaward bends
 To one far point where Titan-boulders form
 The outworks of the land.

III.

Thither we come : the winter afternoon
Is sullen-grey on land and sea ;
And on the cliffs nor lads nor lasses roam :
To-day her sailor-lover tells at home
Unto her listening ear the well-known tale :
While high in heaven hangs the lonely moon,
Long o'er the dark green waste we look, and see
Not a sail.

IV.

We wander ever seaward :
First the beach and then the strip of sand
Runs to a point and ends :
We climb the rocks, and mark to leeward
The swift tide running : twilight sends
A veil unto the darkening land.

V.

Over the treacherous seaweed-carpet slowly
From crag to crag our way we wend ;
The rocky pools reflect the dying light of day :

It is the Sabbath evening holy :
At length the perilous ramparts end—
We reach the point of Filey bay.

VI.

What sea-fight rages here that no one sees?
Hark ! how the heavy guns
Boom ! and the white battle-clouds,
In long procession like to ghostly nuns
In their shrouds,
Rise from the thundering seas !

VII.

It is the war of Filey Brigg :
But hark, between the booming,
What solemn bell is tolling?
Are there churches under-sea? do they dig
Graves beneath the tumbling surges,
Where the wrecked hulls are rolling,
And sing dirges
For the corpses they find roaming?

VIII.

Sad and slow :
It cannot be the ring
Of the rocks, by breakers assail'd,
Which send the pillars of foam on high :
It cannot be the cry,
Long and low,
Of the storm-driven sea-bird on the wing,
Or the bell of a passing ship whose powder has
fail'd.

IX.

Mournful and slow, it seems to toll
Perpetual masses for the dead :
Miserere for thy passing soul,
Bold skipper, doom'd to find thy bed
Deep in God's mighty sea !
What time the roaring winter gale
Brings His last message unto thee,
And thy storm-tatter'd sail !

X.

But haply may the mariner,
Driven before the northern blast,
 A happier story tell :
The weary midnight listener,
With breakers on the lee, at last
 Hears thy mysterious bell.

XI.

When the dark rifts of swift scud sever,
 He sees a light on Flambro' Head,
 And hears a requiem tolling ;
With helm hard down he puts to sea,
And leaves upon his dreaded lee
 The awful thunders rolling
 Upon the rocks of Filey Brigg—
Where for the living and the dead
 Tolls the bell-buoy for ever.

LOVE'S MIRAGE.

THINE hands are wet, my love—is the night cold?
There is no track across the dark wide moor;
The snow lies deep upon the wintry wold,
And thou with weary feet art standing at the door.

Come in, my love of loves : the door is wide,
The rustle of thy garments on the floors
To me is like the breeze at eventide
In summer-time : to-night it roars.

And hath the moan of the winds in the wet woods,
Child, made thee dumb, in thy journey here?
Where is the greeting thou in sweet wanton moods
Didst fling me over the garden-wall down there?

I left thee in thy father's house a year ago,
Nor did I think to meet thee thus and now :

O darling, stand not where the wind and the snow
Drive like a pitiless dream : come to the firelight's
glow.

Canst thou not speak ? thy face is wan and pale ;
Why are thine eyes set in the sadness of death ?
Look into mine : cannot love like this avail
To woo one passionate kiss from thy freezing breath ?

What love is like unto my love, O my heart ?
Can I not fold thee and warm thee, my crownèd
queen ?

Now thou art come never again to part,
The Past shall be as if it never had been.

Come in, my sweet : thy throne, it is vacant still :
What other guest should find thy royal fare ?
For I will give thee such kisses as shall kill
Time, sickness, sorrow, and thy death-like care.

Cold as the ice upon the frozen mere—
My hand can smooth the tresses on thy brow ;
Though winter binds its victims everywhere,
It shall not freeze thee, darling, thus and now.

No word, no sign—the vision fades away :

O God ! why will her ghost come o'er the stream

She promised should divide us, aye and aye !

Me miserere for my hapless dream !

FANNY.

I.

HER eyes were sweet, her lips were meek,
And kind the words she used to speak,

In the happy days ago :

I loved her as one loves a flow'r,
Sometimes for life, sometimes an hour,
As fate will have it so.

II.

I did not tell her of my love,
So light a vow were hard to prove ;
I waited for a day :
The rose-leaves flutter'd to the ground,
And when the Autumn fell, I found
My love had passed away.

ROME.

CHRISTMAS, 1874.

MOTHER of Empires, brooding o'er thy Past !
The air is thick with voices of the dead :
What memories crowd upon us as we tread
On ashes of the centuries, aghast
At those who forged thy sons' undying name
To hew thy temples down, which yet defy
Tempest and time ; on them the curse and shame !
Grief shrouds thine altars, but our tears are dry.
Could thy springs live again, each grassy sod
Would heave, and well in streams of human blood :
But man is weak, what wonder if he turn,
Sick unto death, from thy sepulchral urn ?
My heart is where my love is, ev'n at home,
Whilst thou, pathetic splendour, art but—Rome !

NEW YEAR'S EVE,

1877.

FAREWELL ! Thou hast not been so kind, old year,
 That I should bid thee stay : where are the flow'rs,
 Crocus and hyacinth—I brought to thee
 When thy spring-promptings told me she was dear ?
 What fruit have I of the enchanted hours
 Thine immemorial summer brought to me ?
 Mine immortelles are dead ; my fruit is dust ;
 Therefore, old year, depart, if go thou must,
 And thine unhappy memories bear with thee.
 My heart is weary : tarry not to tell
 The story of love's immortality :
 The midnight ringers toll thy funeral-bell :
 With thee, thrice-hated love, unwept, shall die,
 And leave me, sad with knowledge : fare thee well !

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